

## **Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Oceans and Fisheries Working Group**

Background: APEC was established in 1989 to promote open trade and economic cooperation among economies around the Pacific Rim. APEC members account for over 90% of global aquaculture production, more than 75% of the world's capture fisheries, and approximately 70% of global consumption of fish products. Given that they represent nine of the top ten fish producers in the world, APEC economies are an important voice internationally on fishery-related issues and collectively have a significant impact on the global sustainability of fisheries and responsible practices in fish trade. Similarly, the APEC region encompasses large and varied marine and coastal environments that support marine biodiversity and contribute to marine-related industries, associated economic growth, and food security.

The APEC Marine Resource Conservation Working Group (MRCWG) was established in 1990 to promote initiatives to facilitate domestic and regional policies and programs leading to the sustainability of the marine and coastal environments in the APEC region. In 1991, the APEC Fisheries Working Group (FWG) was created to achieve well-managed fisheries and aquaculture to yield optimal economic value and support of local communities and livelihoods. For over twenty years, these groups actively pursued regional capacity building projects and other activities to address such issues as: impacts of marine pollution on coastal habitat; coral reef conservation; destructive fishing practices; export seafood safety; illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; and sustainable development of aquaculture. All decisions are taken by consensus and project work is funded by the broader APEC organization, with individual members supplementing where possible/appropriate. In 2011, the MRCWG and the FWG jointly decided to merge and form the Ocean and Fisheries Working Group (OFWG). This effort was led by the United States with the goal of cultivating synergy and efficiency between two groups with overlapping/similar mandates. The first meeting of the new OFWG took place during 2012.

Oceans work in APEC is guided by APEC Senior Officials and advanced through periodic Oceans Ministerial Meetings. The first APEC Oceans-related Ministerial Meeting was held in Seoul, Korea in 2002, and resulted in the Seoul Oceans Declaration. In 2005, APEC Ministers met again in Indonesia and endorsed the Bali Plan of Action, which implements the commitments Ministers agreed to in Seoul. The Bali Plan of Action provides a framework to ensure the sustainable development of APEC's marine environments and resources to achieve sustained economic benefits from ocean resources and resilient marine-resource dependent communities. The plan continues to serve as one of the primary guides for the work of the OFWG and is also a reference for other APEC working groups. The third APEC Ocean-Related Ministerial Meeting (AOMM3) was held in Paracas, Peru in October 2010. This meeting provided an opportunity for APEC Ministers to provide a more focused level of commitment to marine issues. The resulting Paracas Declaration and Action Agenda focus OFWG efforts on the following four sub-themes: 1) Sustainable Development and Protection of the Marine Environment; 2) Impacts of Climate Change on the Oceans; 3) Promotion of Free and Open Trade and Investment; and 4) the Role of Oceans in Food Security. AOMM4 is scheduled to take place in China (location TBD) in August 2014.

### Recent events:

The 2nd meeting of the APEC OFWG was held in Medan, Indonesia 23-25 June 2013. Seventeen APEC economies attended: Australia; Chile; People's Republic of China; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Republic of Korea; Mexico; New Zealand, Papua New Guinea; Peru, the Philippines, the Russian Federation; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; the United States; and Viet Nam. Observers included the Nature Conservancy (TNC); the World Wildlife Fund (WWF); and the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC). The meeting was chaired by the OFWG Lead Shepherd, Mr. Greg Schneider (USA). The meeting agenda focused on discussions organized around the four pillars of the OFWG Strategic Plan: Food Security, Free and Open Trade and Investment, Climate Change, and Sustainable Development of the Marine Environment. Additional discussions included dialogue on how to internally improve operations and elevate the group's work in the broader APEC context and presentations on ideas on how to further examine the concept of "blue economy" within the OFWG.

### *OFWG 2013 Meeting Recommendations*

OFWG discussions highlighted the need to mainstream ocean issues in APEC to better address the cross-cutting nature of these topics and raise awareness of the key role ocean and fisheries resources play in supporting robust economies. The group recommended an increased level of communication and cooperation with other relevant APEC fora on ocean and fisheries issues. Target APEC fora include: the Public Partnership for Food Security; the Public Partnership for Science, Technology, and Innovation; the Committee on Trade and Investment; the Energy Working Group; the Transportation Working Group; and the APEC Business Advisory Council (among others). In an effort to address recent OFWG failures to secure project funding under the current APEC criteria, the OFWG encouraged its representatives and the SCE-COW to consider elevating ocean and fisheries issues to Rank 1 of the funding criteria for APEC 2014. The group also expressed the hope that meeting dates across all working groups can be determined well in advance for the 2014 host year and ensure that complementary groups do not overlap, in order to enable further participation by OFWG and private sector representatives.

The following items were endorsed/agreed during Medan OFWG Meeting:

- A draft framework for the Marine Sustainable Development Report, other than the “Blue Economy” and “Ocean Health Index” sections.
- A self-funded proposal from Indonesia for an APEC Ocean and Fisheries Information Center.
- A proposal for the 14th Roundtable Meeting on the Involvement of the Business/Private Sector in the Sustainability of the Marine Environment. Economies suggested that future topics align with the OFWG Priority Areas.
- OFWG participation in the Friends of PPFS Working Group on Agriculture and Fisheries.
- A Russian Pathfinder Interim project on Enhancement of Partnerships among APEC economies on Combating IUU Fishing and Associated Trade by Undertaking Voluntary Obligations on Nonproliferation of Flags of Convenience Practices. The United States and Indonesia agreed to co-sponsor.
- Draft language for the 2013 APEC Leaders’ Statement, to be sent to the SCE for further consideration between now and the CSOM.
- A proposal to hold an APEC Oceans Ministerial Meeting in 2014, hosted by in China. Concern was raised by several economies (including the United States) that no theme or topics had been proposed for the Ministerial Meeting and it was not until after the OFWG meeting that this proposal was actually endorsed.

The following actions were proposed for the intersessional period:

- Further discussions regarding the inclusion of the “Blue Economy” and “Ocean Health Index” sections of the Marine Sustainable Development Report.
- Sharing of information and review of the proposed APEC Ocean Ministerial Meeting’s timeline, details and proposed priority topics.
- Review of the “Mainstreaming Ocean Issues” paper tabled by Indonesia.
- Development, review, and endorsement of the 2014 OFWG Work Plan.
- Drafting, review, and endorsement of the OFWG Food Security Action Plan (in coordination with PPFS).
- Review, finalize and endorse language for the 2013 APEC Leaders’ Statement.
- Provide information to ISOM about OFWG priorities.

Upcoming Meeting: The next meeting of the OFWG will be hosted by China in May 2014. This meeting will address on-going subjects from the 2013 meeting and will serve as a preparatory meeting for the AOMM4 in August 2014. For more information on the activities of the OFWG, see the APEC web site: <http://www.apecsec.org.sg> or contact one of the individuals identified below.

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